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P-stranding diagnoses A'-movement in tough constructions

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snippets

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Contents

1. Theresa Biberauer and Johan Oosthuizen. *More unbearably light elements? Silent verbs demanding overt complementizers in Afrikaans.*
2. Alex Drummond. *The ban on rightward P-stranding is a global constraint.*
3. Giorgio Magri. *The plurality inference of object mass nouns.*
4. Jacopo Romoli. *Presupposition wipe-out can't be all or nothing: a note on conflicting presuppositions.*
5. Philippe Schlenker. *Generalized bishop sentences.*
6. Carson Schütze. *There does not undergo predicate inversion.*
7. Michelle Sheehan. *A note on case assignment to CP.*
8. Gary Thoms. *P-stranding diagnoses A'-movement in tough constructions.*
9. Honglei Wang, David Potter and Masaya Yoshida. *Cross-conjunct binding in nominal gapping.*



8.

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P-stranding diagnoses A'-movement in tough constructions

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“Tough movement” (TM) is exemplified by the pair in (1).

(1) a. It is tough to please linguists.

b. Linguists₁ are tough to please t₁.

The literature on TM reports that it exhibits both A- and A'-properties, and some analyses (e.g. Hicks 2009) have proposed to account for this by decomposing TM derivations into two steps, where the first is A'-movement to the embedded Spec,CP and the second A-movement to Spec,TP. Here I provide a new argument for diagnosing the first step as A'-movement with data from preposition stranding (p-stranding) across languages.

P-stranding languages like English allow for p-stranding with TM:

(2) Magicians₁ are difficult to talk to t₁.

As one might expect, non-p-stranding languages like Italian do not allow for TM with p-stranding:

(3) a. *I maghi sono difficili da parlare a
the magicians are difficult DA talk.INF to
'Magicians are difficult to talk to.'

b. È difficile parlare ai maghi.
is difficult talk.INF to.the magicians.
'It is difficult to talk to magicians.'

It is known that some languages, such as Danish and Icelandic, allow for p-stranding with A'-movement but not A-movement, while there are no known languages that allow for p-stranding in A-movement but not A'-movement. The Danish stranding data is in (4) and the Icelandic in (5) (from Truswell 2009):

(4) a. Hvem har Peter snakket med?

Who has Peter talked with
'Who has Peter talked with?'

b. *Han blev grinet af
He was laughed at
'He was laughed at.'

(5) a. Hvern hefur Pétur talað við?

Who has Peter talked with

‘Who has Peter talked with?’

b. *Ég tel Vigdís vera oftast talað vel um.

I believe Vigdis be.INF most.often spoken well of

‘I believe Vigdis to be most often spoken well of.’

These languages can diagnose whether or not TM – specifically the step of movement from the base position – is A- or A'-movement: if p-stranding is possible in Icelandic and Danish TM, the first step must be A'-movement.

Danish (6) and Icelandic (7) show that these languages allow for p-stranding under TM:

(6) a. Tryllekunstnere er svære at tale med

Magicians are tough to talk with

‘Magicians are tough to talk to.’

b. Det er svært at tale med tryllekunstnere

Expl. is tough to talk with magicians.

‘It is tough to talk to magicians.’

(7) a. Töframenn eru erfiðir að tala við.

Magicians are difficult to talk with.

‘Magicians are difficult to talk to.’

b. Það er erfitt að tala við töframenn

Expl. is tough to talk with magicians

‘It is tough to talk to magicians.’

c. Hinrik VIII var erfiðir að búa með

Henry VIII was difficult to live with

(Thránsson 2007: 431)

This indicates that the first move in TM dependencies must be A'-movement.

References

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